

Annika Sarajärvi
DEVELOPING TAMPERE VOCATIONAL COLLEGE'S
ENGLISH WEBSITES

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Sarajärvi, Annika

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

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The purpose of this thesis was to develop the marketing communication of Tampere Vocational College done in English via their websites. In addition the aim was to create a development plan for the English websites of Tampere Vocational College that included defining the target groups using the site, content these target groups are interested in and giving suggestions regarding the features that should be updated in addition of considering the updating responsibilities.

The topics discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis include introducing Sweeney's eight strategic steps of developing a website, that consists of; defining objectives, target markets and services, building a blueprint, writing and marketing the site, as well as measuring the success and testing and refining accordingly. The theoretical part also illustrated the Q2C model by Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey that forms the genetics of a good website including issues such as design and graphical interface, navigation and information structure, functionality and performance as well as content. This part of the thesis relies heavily on professional literature.

The empirical part of this thesis included a research that was conducted with qualitative research methods, because the study aimed at overall gathering of information on the subject, allowed the respondents to be chosen obfuscationally and enabled respondents' ideas and opinions to surface. Five semi-structured interview was conducted consisting of experts working with international operations in the case organization were interviewed about the target groups, their information needs, features to be developed and updating responsibilities.

The results of the study show that the objectives for the website should be reconsidered and more carefully defined. In addition the architecture of the site still needs some additional work. The site could be developed by incorporating content supporting search engines to rank the site, using responsive webdesign to enable the increasing mobile usage and decreasing the amount of content in the site. Offering self-service tools and possibilities for viral marketing would be beneficiary. The case organization would benefit from more regular monitoring on the visitors, where they are coming from and why are they leaving. User testing is recommended to find out what is working and what is not when considering usability, navigation and functionality of the site. Further development of the site should not be forgotten, but rather the site should constantly develop, evolve and grow according to users and possible changes in the operating environment.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The educational field seems to be in constant change. Government of Finland is seeking to save costs by merging schools to each other. As a result Tampere College (TAO) and Pirkanmaa Educational Consortium (PIRKO) merged together on 1st of January 2013. New organization was named as Tampere Vocational College (TREDU) and the school is owned by the City of Tampere. This merger has created a possibility to reconsider the organizations websites, develop them into more modern ones, including interactive content and utilizing all possible features the technologies have to offer these days. This subject was suggested to me because I am currently working in the marketing department of Tampere Vocational College and my job description in the organization focuses on internet marketing and overall development of the marketing efforts implemented on the Internet. This subject is also a passion of mine, since the previous websites of both organizations have been extremely out-of-date and my mission is to bring the new site of Tampere Vocational College to this century and to be able to implement all new technologies that are available in the Internet world these days. In addition I am aiming for the new site of Tampere Vocational College to be developed more in the view of the customers instead of the organizations' and seeking to find out how Tampere Vocational College could serve them even better in the future.

The purpose of this study is to build Tampere Vocational College's international brand and conspicuousness abroad via their websites. The objective of this study is to create a development plan for the English websites that includes defining the target groups, and the content these groups are interested in and giving suggestions regarding the features that should be updated in the sites as well as considering the updating responsibilities. Using this information the organization is developing the English websites purely to serve the needs of these target groups that are seeking information in English and are not able to use the Finnish language site for the reason of not understanding Finnish at all. The research is conducted as a qualitative research as a case study focusing on this single organization. The aim is to define the target groups using the English websites and their possible information needs by organizing semi-structured interviews including all the personnel currently working with international

operations in the organization. Theoretical framework introduces the basic elements of well planned and executed website and gives suggestions on how to develop the content and functionality to even better serve the users.

Other educational organizations are probably facing the same challenges regarding their marketing communication done in English or are at least forced to reconsider their websites, hence the Internet world is developing and changing very rapidly and offering a lot of new possibilities. This study could serve them as benchmarking purposes or otherwise give some ideas on how to develop their own websites in the future.

2 CASE ORGANIZATION

Pirkanmaa Educational Consortium and Tampere College united 1st January 2013 to become Tampere Vocational College Tredu. This new organization is a part of Tampere Upper Secondary Education and thus the city of Tampere. Tampere Vocational College has annually over 8 000 certificate (youth) students and about 10 000 adult students. The organization has staff merely 1 200 and has offices in 20 different locations in the area of 8 different municipalities (Puisto, personal information on 16th of January 2013, webpages of Tampere Vocational College 2013). Tampere Vocational College's "product" is education services and it offers individual study paths in over 30 vocational qualifications (over 100 different education programs), 35 further vocational qualifications; and over 10 special vocational qualifications. The product range includes also working life development services, apprenticeship training and preparatory education for immigrants (Puisto, personal information on 16th of January 2013, webpages of Tampere Vocational College 2013).

The objective of the whole organization is to be seen as one integral organization offering educational possibilities for both; youth and adult students as well as apprenticeship training. The mission includes being the biggest vocational educator in the Pirkanmaa region and the focus is to offer quality education. The vision is to be able

to offer versatile study pathways that enable students of all ages to study on the most appropriate level and read up on the branch that truly interests and inspires. (Raukola, personal information on 16th of January 2013).

The previous English language websites of Tampere College and Pirkanmaa Educational Consortium have been created with organizational approach that focuses the perspective of the organization rather than the targeted users or their needs. In addition the existing websites of Tampere College and Pirkanmaa Educational Consortium have had many problems and the updating work has been done mainly manually. Hence the educational offering is about to become much larger, some improvements to the systems and especially reconsideration of the important content on the websites is essential at this point. In addition Tampere College has already had some education programs conducted in English and the offering is about to develop even further. The old existing websites have not been serving the target groups very well and this has caused enormously additional work to personnel handling international affairs. The economical situation of the organization and the desire to optimize operations and create savings in personnel costs creates the basis for reconsideration of the content. This topic has been suggested to the researcher by the organization because there is a need to serve these international operations target groups more effectively in the future. The need to develop the new English websites for Tampere Vocational College is urgent which creates pressure and challenges regarding this thesis work.

3 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This merger that took place on 1st of January 2013 has presented the possibility to reconsider the problems with previous websites and develop the new Tampere Vocational College websites to better serve the needs the organization has and issues that have been emphasized in the strategy of the city of Tampere.

The purpose of this study is to develop the marketing communication of Tampere Vocational College done in English focusing on the communication done via Tampe-

re Vocational College's English websites. The new website of Tampere Vocational College is also aiming to building Tampere Vocational College's international brand and conspicuousness abroad. The objective of this study is to create a development plan for the English websites that includes defining the target groups, and the content these groups are interested in and giving suggestions regarding the features that should be updated in the sites as well as considering the updating responsibilities. Using this information the organization is developing the English websites purely to serve the needs of these target groups that are seeking information in English and are not able to use the Finnish language site for the reason of not understanding Finnish at all.

The first part of this thesis will focus on introducing the process of developing a website and illustrating the features that form a good website. The theory part is based on the eight-step model introduced by Susan Sweeney, that deals with creating the architecture of the websites, designing the content & graphical interface as well as measuring the success of the website.

The second part of this thesis will focus on empirical research to answer the following research questions:

How can Tampere Vocational College make its English language websites to better serve its customers and co-operation partners?

- What are the target groups that need information in English language?
- What information do they need?
- How should the content be developed in the websites?
- Who should be responsible for keeping the information up-to-date?

The empirical research is done by conducting five interviews with the personnel working with international operations in the case organization. All of the personnel working with international operations are interviewed in order to define the target groups using the English websites, gathering information regarding their information needs and how the content of the websites could be developed to serve their needs better. The final part of this thesis focuses on analyzing the results from the empirical research to find answers to the research questions and drawing conclusions and further suggestions for the case organization based on the theory and empirical research.

4 COMPANY'S STRATEGY GUIDES THE DEVELOPMENT WORK

Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders (2008, 128-129) state that strategic planning encourages organizations to systematic thinking and actually forces the company to sharpen its objectives that ultimately leads to better coordination of efforts providing clearer performance standards for control. It also helps companies to anticipate and response quickly to environmental changes and in addition to prepare better for sudden developments. In continuation strategic planning sets the stage for marketing planning. Strategic planning process starts in the headquarters of the organization and is followed by each business unit's plans that support the company-wide strategic plan. (Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders 2008, 128-129).

Tampere *city strategy* describes how the city is to be developed and communicates the targeted future and identifies the instruments required to achieve it. The aim is consistent and long-term development taking into consideration the changes in the operating environment. In addition the city strategy is also essential for making choices; for personnel the strategy creates the framework of activities and helps them to understand their own work within the context of the large entity forming the basis of service and production strategies. As Tampere Vocational College is owned by and financed by the City of Tampere, the city strategy also steers its operations. According to the city strategy high standard education is one of the cornerstones of success among renewal capacity and close local and international co-operation ensuring success. Thus goals are to be an attractive international business environment as well as a center for high standards of education and research. The versatile supply of education as well as deepening the co-operation between enterprises, educational institutions, research institutes and public sector are considered to be substantial factors of attraction in Tampere. *Especially the education sector should focus on increased internationality and working-life orientation.* (Tampere City Strategy 2020).

This strategy drives the need to consider Tampere Vocational College's English websites in a new perspective. Tampere Vocational College has a need to offer information on the Internet in English not only to achieve the strategic goal set by the Tampere city strategy but also because there are several target groups that are seek-

ing information regarding the organization. These target groups include incoming exchange students, partner organizations in projects as well as student and teacher exchange programs etcetera. These target groups are becoming even more important in the future years. The reasons for choosing to develop the English websites separately from the Finnish site lie in the limited amount of resources regarding personnel updating the sites. It has been discovered that the resources are not sufficient enough to provide the same information in English sites that Tampere Vocational College is offering on their Finnish site nor is this information in all necessary or interesting to the target groups in question. In addition it has also been discovered that users seeking information in English tend to seek different information than users using the Finnish site.

Kotler argues that as marketing practices are changing, companies are forced to move into e-marketing, in many cases this means operating their own websites (Kotler 2003, 48; Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders 2008, 851). Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey (2006, 76) also states that customers are expecting companies to have websites but more over they also expect it to answer all of their questions and fulfilling all of their needs. Gaining new customers, serving existing customers even better, streaming costs and to provide information are merely a few reasons listed by Sweeney on why websites are a necessity in today's business world. (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 74). Having a website enables a company to be found in the internet by potential customers thus making it possible to offer information 24 hours 7 days a week making the information available to anyone anywhere at the same time. The site can also help build business reputation and generate awareness, operate as an effective and affordable channel to market your services and reduce marketing costs by replacing some brochures, but also to improve communications with company's audiences. Finally it is also good for the environment but most importantly it can operate as a hub of company's marketing efforts. (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 75-77).

Kalliola (2012, 175) adds that company websites are actually the only online media that is totally controlled by the organization itself regarding visual components, content and functionality thus enabling the brand to be communicated in a way favourable to the organization.

Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey (2006, 77) and Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders (2008, 851) managed to convince the importance of having a website, but raised a question of what are the qualities of a good website? The key challenge seems to be how to build a site that is attractive and interesting enough for visitors to come to the site again. Kotler states that in today's world the content should include text, pictures, sound and animations to be interesting to the viewer (Kotler 2003, 48; Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders 2008, 851).

5 PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A WEBSITE

Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey (2006, 89) describe the process of developing a website with an eight-step plan. The eight steps include; (1) doing research to understand your objectives, target market and services, (2) preparing a strategy or "a blueprint" for the architecture of the website that speaks directly to the user, (3) designing graphical interface and content, (4) building a website and the supporting applications, (5) launching the website, (6) marketing it, (7) measuring the success and finally (8) testing, refining, testing and refining again. (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 89-91).



Figure 1. Eight strategic steps of developing a website (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 89-91).

Following the 8 steps in this study

This study aims at defining the information needed in step 1 by interviewing expert personnel in the organization, followed by deriving information needed in steps 2 and 3 from theory in literature. In this study the step 4 focuses on the actual content and how writing for the web differs from writing for print. Step 5 regarding the launching of the site is not included or dealt with in this study. In addition step 6 regarding marketing of the site in this study focuses on search engine optimization as means of marketing the site. Finally steps 7 and 8 are discussed briefly. The final step in Sweeney's model concerning testing and refining the content and features on the site could also be a good subject for a further study on the matter for the case organization.

5.1 Step 1: Defining objectives, target groups and services

Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey (2006, 89) argue that the most important step before even planning the content or visual elements of the website, is to understand the objectives that the company is seeking to achieve via its websites. Furthermore they encourage to also consider the target markets and the product offering of the company and of the competitive landscape, knowing your environment before diving in. With the help of reviewing market research studies, conducting competitive analysis, hosting interviews, running surveys and more, the company is able to educate themselves before starting to put together the architecture of their company's website. Benchmarking other websites or taking thorough look to the company's old sites can give ideas on what is working and what is not. (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 89).

In today's world the website is merely one element in the company's online presence along with their blog, Facebook page, YouTube channel, and possible accounts in other social media applications. Furthermore, it is critically important to define;

- The objectives of the organization,
- Needs, wants, and expectations of the target markets and users,
- Products and services that are being offered. (Sweeney 2011, 2).

Sweeney (2011, 3) elaborates that the objectives are divided to primary and secondary objectives, and reminds that each element in the website should relate back to the organizations' objectives. Primary objectives can consist of issues such as advertising products, providing customer service and support or creating and establishing brand identity and brand awareness, the secondary objectives often are more technical in their nature. Secondary objectives to consider:

- Designing the site to be search engine friendly,
- Developing a site that will also promote your company's blog and other social media accounts, and vice versa,
- Designing the site to encourage repeat traffic,
- Including viral marketing elements to the website, that encourage users to recommend your products or services to others,
- Designing the website to encourage customer loyalty,
- Incorporating interactive elements to the website to encourage users to stay a while in the site and visit many different areas of the site. (Sweeney 2011, 4).

Sadly many companies totally neglect secondary objectives that could help them succeed online, furthermore website objectives form a critical element in website de-

sign and development. Equally important is to define the target markets and –groups, focusing on users needs, wants and expectations. Company’s objective should be to exceed the target users expectations not merely to reach them. Finally the company should also consider and define the products and services that are promoted online, if the online offering includes all company’s products, only a part of them, or if some products are only sold online. Once the objectives, target markets and –groups, and product and service offering has been clearly defined, the next phase for the organization to take is completing a competitive analysis. (Sweeney 2011, 4-7).

5.2 Step 2: Preparing blueprint of the site

The following step after having completed identification of objectives, target markets and –groups and product and service offering, is to start developing the storyboard (e.g. a blueprint) of the company’s site. In fact in website development the majority of the time should be spent in the planning stage, before the construction of the website even begins. Only when the storyboard or a blueprint of the site is done, the specific content, text and graphics for each page are developed. (Sweeney 2011, 9, 11).

Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey (2006, 81) argue that once a customer enters your websites you have mere seconds to communicate your message to them letting them know they have found what they are looking for. Once the attention is received, it must also be maintained in order for them to take the next step and follow through action. The content on the website should be based on the requirements and needs of the audience and introduce the idea of “ a blueprint” of the website to guide the architecture and content planning of the websites in a way that the content will speak directly to the target market and drives to action. This blueprint consist of how the website components are tied together and are laid out to produce a solid and functional website including navigation structure as well as recommended content for each page on the site (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 89-90).

5.3 Step 3: Designing the site

Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey (2006, 81) introduces a Q2C model (from qualifying the prospect to capturing the conversion) that forms the genetics of a good website, the four areas discussed are; design, navigation, content and functionality. The model is introduced in detail in the following chapters.

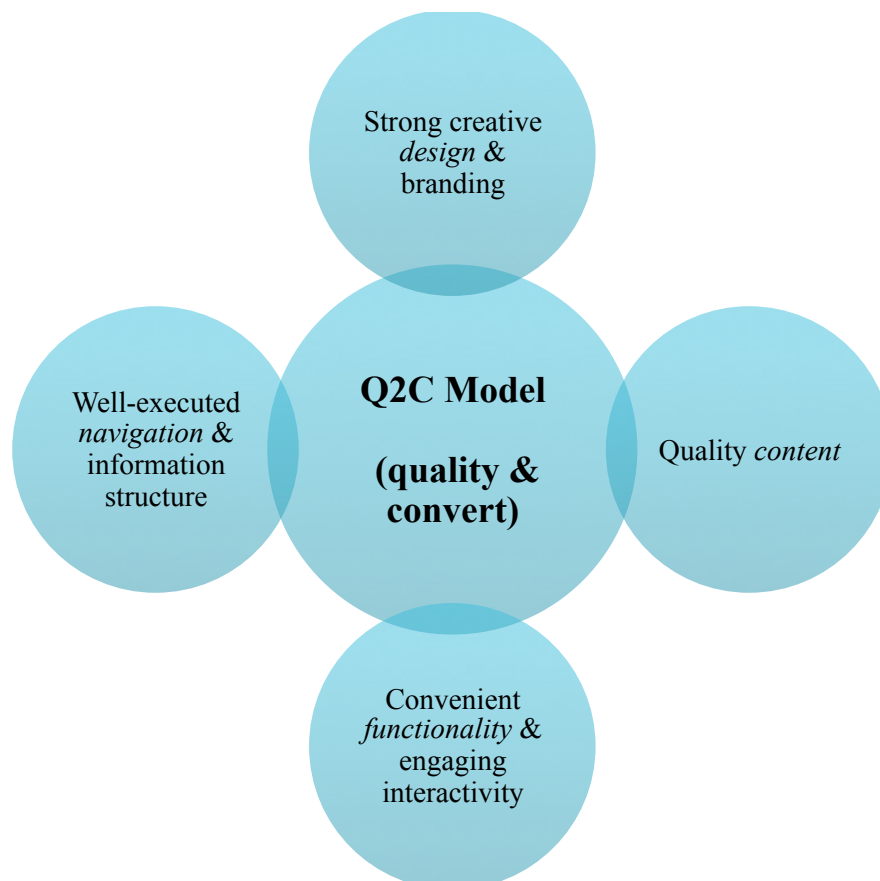


Figure 2. The Q2C Model (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 81).

5.3.1 Design and graphical interface

Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey (2006, 82) justify the importance of strong design and creative branding by a statement that users actually judge the book by its covers, when first coming to a website. The graphic design of the website should communicate the value proposition and positioning of the brand throughout visuals. The design should aim at being engaging, promote a memorable experience and be consistent with the message delivered through traditional means as well. The intended

target audience and things that will make them respond favourably should be considered. The design should already naturally guide the eye of potential customer. This can be done by making the content easy for users to scan, using fonts that are easy to read and colors that will not cause any problems, for example presenting dark text on a light-colored background is easier to read than patterned backgrounded website. A notable fact to consider is also the fact that approximately 10 percent of the population is red-green colorblind. (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 82).

Pohjanoksa, Kuokkanen & Raaska (2007, 157) continue this statement and suggest that also font size and color are significant factors. When dealing with public organizations (JUHTA 2005, 13) gives guidelines in developing webservices. JHS 129 Julkishallinnon verkkopalvelun suunnittelun ja toteuttamisen periaatteet defines that webservice should be able to use without pictures and sound, also color blindness has to be considered when designing the colouring of the services. (JUHTA 2005, 13).

In addition the quality, functionality and performance aspects should be considered to complement visual appeal. Content should be easy to follow, in addition attention should be also paid to the heaviness of the design, using multiple pictures causes the site to load for a long time in the end users browser. Furthermore the screen resolution should also be considered hence horizontal scrolling of the site is a sure thing to irritate users. (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 81-83).

Snell (2013, 12) continues about the importance to consider screen resolution and screen size issues and points out that in the past decade the sizes of displays has grown tremendously into more and more diverse, users are surfing websites using mobile phones, tablets, laptops and even with cinema displays. To solve this new need for positive user experience on any device, responsive web design is the latest in technologies making it possible for companies to address the growing ways of accessing content on the web. Responsive web design uses flexible components as media queries to build a fluid design that adapts to all different display solutions, resolutions and positioning by ensuring that all elements in the websites are able to resize themselves based on the display dimensions (Snell 2013, 12; 14-16). Kalliola (2012, 181) also recognizes the importance of considering the increasing usage of websites via mobile devices and points out that responsive web design should be implemented

in the beginning of the website development project hence it seems to be difficult to implement later on.

Kalliola (2012, 182) continues that planning the interface is essential part of developing a website, but sadly often overlooked. According to Nielsen (2012) easiness of the interface usage is a quality attribute. Nielsen (2012) introduces five components affecting usability; (1) learnability, (2) efficiency, (3) memorability, (4) errors and (5) satisfaction.

- *Learnability* means how easy it is for users to accomplish basic tasks the first time they encounter the design,
- *Efficiency* deals with how quickly users are able to perform tasks once they have learned the design,
- *Memorability* on the other hand focuses on the easiness of users to reestablish proficiency once they return to the design after a period of not using it, whilst
- *Errors* meaning the amount of wrong choices made by users, their severity and the ability to recover from those errors made and finally,
- *Satisfaction* defining how pleasant the usage of the design is. (Nielsen 2012).

Easiness to use the interface is a necessary condition on the Web; otherwise users leave your site. He also adds that also homepage on your site plays an important role in this matter. (Nielsen 2012). Pohjanoksa, Kuokkanen & Raaska (2007, 150) also speak for the importance of the homepage, and its function to clearly state the purpose of the websites, but remind that the homepage cannot be stuffed either.

5.3.2 Navigation and information structure

Another important point in website development is well-executed navigation and information structure; meaning that users will end up where they intended when clicking a link. Nearly 30 percent of users assign significant weight to information structure when assessing the credibility of the websites. The structure should indeed be logical, focused around key objectives of the target group, easy to use, free of errors and consistent throughout the websites. Offering multiple navigation alternatives makes it easier for users to find what they were looking for, attention should also be paid to different accessibility issues such as using HTML or Flash, having a Site Map and preferably offering a site search as well. Furthermore having good navigation

also helps search engines index the websites. (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 83-84).

Pohjanoksa, Kuokkanen & Raaska (2007, 150-152) also introduce a few tips to increase easiness of navigation; users should be aware of where they currently are located on the site; navigation and hierarchy of the structure should be clear, users should know what is behind links including the fact that they know if some content is actually an attachment on the site and of what file format is in question. Pohjanoksa, Kuokkanen & Raaska (2007, 152-155) also mention factors enhancing functionality, such as site search, site map, using breadcrumb navigation.

Public organization's websites are regulated by the Ministry of Finance and their guidelines state that users location on the websites should be presented in the websites, either in navigation panel, in heading, in breadcrumb navigation or in website address (Ministry of Finance 2007). Nielsen (2007) has been rooting for breadcrumb navigation since 1995, because it shows the users where they currently are located in the websites taking only a small space in the page, and thus helps to understand the hierarchy of the sites, enables to move in the site with just one click and finally hence it does not cause problems in usability testing – users do not misunderstand it and always know how to utilize it. Nielsen (2001) also states that drop-down menus actually often have low usability and they tend to confuse users or lead them to unintended parts of the site.

5.3.3 Content

Great structure, navigation plan and the exterior design of the website is not enough if the content of the websites is not sufficient or focused to convert the user, the content must address the need of the users. (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 85).

Kauhanen-Simanainen (2003, 21, 28-29) deals with the same idea but uses a term *information architecture* that is often mixed with technical architecture that defines the operating systems and programs used to publish the websites. Information architecture is actually information planning in which content elements and their interrela-

tions are designed as a logical structure where information is easily used and maintained. In other words it involves creating order of information that is usable and easy to follow and understand. Future should be considered as well, technological improvements and developments create new possibilities, which should be considered at all points (Kauhanen-Simanainen 2003, 21, 28-29, 140). JUHTA (2005, 13) also states that content production should start with designing the structure and planning the overall structure of the websites and correlations between pages.

Nielsen's (1997) studies support the importance of content planning and especially the amount of content to be displayed in the sites. He argues that users do not actually read on the Web; instead of actually reading Web pages word-by-word, users scan the page picking up individual words and sentences. As a solution website content should be scannable text. This can be accomplished by highlighting key words in the text, using meaningful subheadings, writing only one idea per paragraph, writing according to the inverted pyramid that is usually used in news texts, and finally writing only half of the word count than in conventional writing. (Nielsen 1997).

Common communication problem in website design is the differences in perspective, often the sites are designed according to organizations structure when it should be designed according to users perspective, hence users are interested in the products and services of the organization instead of their internal affairs (Samela 2002, 160). Another mistake done by several website developers is not integrating structure and navigation with each other resulting a website where users are not able to find what they need, as Nielsen (2009) states.

Kalliola (2012, 176) defines that the basic content of the websites should include at least the following;

- Description of the company's operations including introducing the management, personnel, mode of operation and a short history,
- Products and services in customers point of view,
- Supportive services,
- Recruiting information,
- Contact information preferably including a map, transport possibilities and a picture of the premises.

If the company has presence in some other medias in the Internet for example in Facebook, content from these places is often beneficiary to present also on the company websites, but not everything should be copied otherwise the updating and maintenance work can get too complicated. (Kalliola 2012, 179).

5.3.4 Functionality and performance

According to Sinkkonen, Kuoppala, Parkkinen & Vastamäki (2006, 15, 110) functionality or usability deals with the suitability of the product to its intended use, or to what it is developed for. In designing a website one must first get to know the target group and what are their information needs as has been presented in multiple occasions in the previous chapters as well. In order to satisfy users expectations regarding usability following aspects should be considered; way of presenting information, suitable amount of information, order and hierarchy of the content as well as navigation, importance order and visibility of content (Sinkkonen, Kuoppala, Parkkinen & Vastamäki 2006, 15, 110).

Nielsen (2012) also introduces utility as one of the key quality attributes, referring to functionality of the design. In Nielsen's opinion functionality and utility are equally important and together determine wheather something is useful, easiness is nothing if it is not what you want, Nielsen (2012) defines. Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey (2006, 85) continue the idea of Nielsen and state that the key issue in website functionality is most definitely easiness in everything. The site should have the right look and feel; have excellent navigation and useful information that is easily found.

Users might perhaps be expecting even more, for example looking to download a brochure or to sign in for a course, hence offering some self-service tools might be useful. In addition some possibilities of value-added functionality options, such as viral marketing "tell a friend" –functionality or self-serve customer service applications such as ability to download brochures, partake in real-time chat or easily printed page content would be beneficiary to use. (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 85-87).

Other issue equally important to consider besides functionality is performance. Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey (2006, 87) remind that still many users abroad are using dial-up connections to go online, thus building a website using entirely Macromedia Flash with heavy animations and pictures can exclude a large amount of users from the site. In addition sites build on Flash tend to force the users to sit through the same sequences over and over again, when users might desire to look for information as quickly as possible. Cross-browser compatibility should also be considered, because everyone is not using the latest Windows or even Internet Explorer, the functionality when using other operating systems and browsers should be considered and tested as well. (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 87-88).

5.4 Step 4: Building and writing the site

Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey (2006, 85) argue that writing for the Web is different from writing for print, because users read differently (more slowly) in the Web. Nielsen's studies and articles support this idea. Nielsen (2008) states that users read about 20-28 percent of the content. Furthermore Nielsen (2006) argues that usually the users reading imitates the pattern of F-letter, meaning that users do not read all the content, the most important information has to be presented in the first chapter even though the user spends only one second to read this chapter as well as starting the headings, subheadings and listings with interesting key words that evoke interest.

The most important things should be considered in the users point of view not the organizations, thus never start a sentence with the company name, but rather with the need of the users. Kortesoja (2012, 24) advises that headings and subheadings should be based on one or two words, and long words should not be used in headings, does not recommend using abbreviations or to repeat the same base word repeatedly. Writing the first chapter, as it was a caption is also beneficial in the web environment because it enables the caption to be presented in other websites as well, Kortesoja (2012, 29) explains.

Pohjanoksa, Kuokkanen & Raaska (2007, 187) introduce the basic criteria for web texts that can carry you a long way; keep it short, present the most important facts

first and pay attention to discontinuation. Short chapters are easy to browse, short sentences are more fluent to read and short words are easy to understand thus a text that is interesting and rich on paper, turns into obscure on the web. Chapters having more than five rows look like giant blocks on the websites, thus help the user by adding spaces between chapters. All lists including more than three aspects should be docketed. (Pohjanoksa, Kuokkanen & Raaska 2007, 186-187, 188). If you are forced to write a longer text for some reason, Korteso (2012, 36) offers some tricks on how to ease the reader; divide the text to several different pages, for example contact information could be divided by cities or municipalities etcetera. Other ways are; using numbering, or indent that helps the user to structure the information and using sub-headings and pictures to pace the text. (Korteso 2012, 36-37).

Another challenge with organization communicating concretized in the desire to write everything there is to say about the subject instead of considering what is interesting to the reader. Pohjanoksa, Kuokkanen & Raaska (2007, 187) suggest that all – “and – that”, “except – too”, “always thence – there from” sentences should be replaced with simple “and”; they are merely making the text heavy. If the outcome does not please you, you have probably reached to the core of the problem – the message should be reframed. (Pohjanoksa, Kuokkanen & Raaska 2007, 187). Korteso (2012, 37) as well as Pohjanoksa, Kuokkanen & Raaska (2007, 188) also point out that underlines are reserved for links, italicized text is harder to read on the screen than bold and usage of capital letters should be considered carefully, small letters are easier to read, in addition centralized text is also very hard to follow.

Finally Kalliola (2012, 184) reminds that usually the actual writing work takes longer than anticipated in the beginning, this is the reason why it should be considered in the beginning of the development project to be able to organize the responsibilities and schedules.

5.5 Step 6: Marketing and helping users find the site

Once the content and design of the site has been determined and the site has been launched there are several ways to promote it. By means of repeat-traffic generators,

social media marketing, using landing- or campaign pages, viral and permission marketing, as well as latest trends in online marketing such as search engine optimization. (Sweeney 2011, 11). When users are looking for information on the Web, they most commonly use a search engine to find what they are looking for. Hence search engines are able to bring significant volumes of traffic to your website, it is beneficiary to understand how major search engines work in order to ensure that your site receives maximum points for those things that can be influenced, because users rarely go beyond the first page of results when conducting searches via search engines (Sweeney 2011, 13).

Search engines have increased their popularity and millions of searches are done via them in a minute. Search engine optimization (SEO) seeks to improve the sites visibility in search results done via search engines such as Google. SEO includes content planning, linking between sites and visitor monitoring (Grappone & Couzin 2008, 4; Karjaluoto 2010, 133; Poutiainen 2006, 146). Importance of high visibility in results done via search engines can be justified by the fact that 90 percent of users look for the first three pages of results before changing the search term. In addition Enge, Spencer, Fishkin, Stricchiola & Battelle (2009, 18) have argued that placement among the first search results has another affect; 36 percent of users considered that organizations among the top three results are also among the best ones in the industry. Kalliola (2012, 182-183) states that the easiest and cheapest way of search engine optimazation is to use the vocabulary that users use, meaning that possible words used in the search are often mentioned in the content of the webpages. Of course there are also risks in SEO, by doing wrong decisions and actions, the site might end up on a black list, that prevents the search engines from opening the site and thus not finding these sites on a black list in search engine results. In addition getting off the black list has been said to be nearly impossible (Poutiainen 2006, 200).

5.6 Step 7: Measuring success

When the site is operating there might still be room for improvement, or at least there should be an interest if the development work that has been done has paid off.

(Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 91). Bugarski (2009, 9) argues the importance of web analytics to be able to boost your lead in the Web. He states that is extremely important to measure the success of your websites, there should be a curiosity to know who is visiting, how long they stay and where they are going. He also introduces a free of charge web analytics tool Google Analytics because of its simplicity and explains the understanding of web analytics to be about few simple things what to look for and how to understand the statistics to be able to get the right numbers to make a better site. In his opinion the most significant factors are; (1) visitors who have been on your site, (2) traffic sources and (3) the bounce rates. (Bugarski 2009, 9-10).

Bugarski (2009, 9-10) guides to look for the individual visitors your site has had and secondly to look for the “exit pages” meaning the pages where users leave your site; this tells you which pages are misleading, boring and scaring your users away. Thirdly you should check where your users are coming from, either via direct traffic, referral traffic or search engine traffic. Direct ones are those who type your exact website address in the address bar, referrals means other sites you might have an ad and search engine traffic being the users that have searched something via Google and then clicked your site in the result list. When examining the traffic coming via search engines it is beneficiary to also look for they key phrases or words used to get an idea of what users were looking for. Thirdly check the bounce rate, which means the amount of users that came to your site and just left without going any further, not even clicking anything. A big bounce rate might tell something about the content of the page, its’ compelling abilities or unsuccessful key phrases and words. (Bugarski 2009, 9-10).

5.7 Step 8: Testing and refining the site

In the final step of the eight-step plan Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey (2006, 91) suggest that the company website should evolve and grow constantly but also adapt to changes either in customers’ needs as well as in the operating environment. Companies need to keep their sites fresh in order to retain customers and increase conversations (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 91). According to Nielsen (2012, 2001)

the first rule of website testing is: do not listen to the users, but merely pay attention to what they do and watch the users when they actually attempt to perform tasks. Nielsen (2012) introduces basic and useful way of improving website functionality by user testing. He suggests to identifying the most important issues in functionality problems by searching five testing users such as customers for example and not asking them how well the site is working but rather observing what they do, where they succeed and what difficulties they face. In Nielsen's (2012) opinion it is better to organize multiple small tests in order to save in costs and comparing the results in each test.

5.8 Conclusions from theoretical framework

To summarize, the actual planning work seems to take a lot more time than companies are perhaps anticipating when starting the website development project. Through careful consideration and taking the time to consider the company operations in the customers point of view is bound to be a success, but rarely companies are patient enough to take the time. The road to success seems to lie in planning the content and especially the structure and architecture of the content presented in the sites; but not forgetting the navigation and easiness of usage. Surprisingly the visual appearance and features are merely a small part of website development. In many cases a lot could be learned in measuring the success in current websites and planning development steps from information received via website traffic information. The old marketing truth seems to apply here as well; one must know customers needs in order to succeed also in the website world.

In this study the theoretical framework has introduced multiple technical issues that indeed must be considered when planning and developing the English website of Tampere Vocational College. This literature review has definitely given many ideas on how to improve the functionality, usability and navigation in Tampere Vocational College's website and the actual tools to develop some features that the organization has received feedback from. These tools have proven to be very practical and in the end easily utilized. Among other things these tools offer assistance in developing the

issues users have been giving feedback of. Based of this theoretical framework multiple development suggestions can be made to the case organization.

6 METHODOLOGY USED IN THE STUDY

6.1 Qualitative research

Usually qualitative research is seen as a soft, subjective, flexible, inductive and relativistic research that is often used to understand feelings, values and perceptions that underlie and influence behavior and develop hypotheses for further testing. In this study qualitative method has been chosen because it focuses on overall gathering of information on the subject in matter and enables the data collection to take place in natural situations. Qualitative research was chosen because in addition to favoring humans as instrumentns of information it also allows the respondents to be chosen obfuscationally instead of using random sample and it enables the respondents' insights and opinions to surface. Qualitative research also enables the case to be dealt as unique and interpret the data accordingly. The study plan can also be refined during the research process if necessary. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 1997, 160).

This study is conducted as a case study; hence it aims at generating detailed, intensive information on a single case (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 1997, 130). The case study approach enables the researcher to gain rich understanding of the context of the research and generates the ability to answer questions of "what" and "how". Using case study method also enables to collect data by interviewing, observation and documentary analysis. In addition the case study method has been chosen because the researcher is working in the case organization but seems to be the justified choice hence the aim is to explore the existing theory to support the development plan to be done for this case organization (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2007, 146-147).

According to Metsämuuronen (2001, 17) advantages of a case study include possibilities to generalize as well as take into consideration the complexity of a social thrust

but also to support alternative interpretations and produce descriptive data that can be interpreted in multiple ways. Other advantages of a case study are that it often triggers action and the results can be utilized in practice but also it can suggest directions for further studies even if a case study does not always result a hypothesis being tested. (Metsämuuronen 2001, 17).

6.2 Interviews as data collection methods

In qualitative research methods can vary, the most common methods for collecting data are questionnaires, interviews, observation, and information based on other documents. These methods are not mutually exclusive but they can also be used alone, in parallel or combined depending on the research problem in question. (Adams 2007, 87; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 73). Hence qualitative research does not aim to give statistical generalizations but to understand or describe a phenomenon or a process it is important that the informants have substantial knowledge and experience on the subject of the study. Research interviewing aims to systematically gather information, takes place in interaction between the respondents and the researcher and is planned ahead and managed by the researcher. (Metsämuuronen 2001, 40).

Interviews can be conducted by interviewing one person at a time, organizing respondents as pairs or as group interviews. Interviewing can also be conducted in multiple different ways; using in-depth interviews, structured interviews, semi-structured or in other words focused interviews or group interviews. In-depth interview is the nearest of conversation, the researcher wants to learn informants ideas, opinions, feelings, presumption and even the theme can vary during the interview but at the same time it is also very time consuming. In a structured interview the questions and the order of questions are the same for all the respondents and it is suitable method when the target group is homogenous and there are several respondents. Focused interview (also known as semi-structured interview) also has a structure but the questions do not have a strict order or form but rather focus on certain themes or topics. Focused interview is suitable for subjects concerning delicate issues such as beliefs, values or topics that are lightly unconscious. Often the number of respond-

ents is also small but the amount of work required in the analyzing phase is rather ample. (Hirsjärvi et al 1997, 204-206; Metsämuuronen 2001, 38, 41-43).

In this study the general information of the organization in addition to public sources was obtained by interviewing the Communications Manager and Marketing Co-Ordinator of Tampere Vocational College. In addition the researcher has been working for the case organization since 2009 and has the knowledge of the organizational structure and company operations. Interviewing was selected for this study because it aims at acquiring as much information as possible from the respondents, but also is a flexible way of collecting data and enables the researcher to ask additional questions and further clarifications. One of the reasons for selecting interviews, as data collection method was also the fact that respondents rarely decline from an interview but would do so if sent a questionnaire.

The focused interview or semi-structured interview was selected for this study because the aim of this study was to collect information on known four themes, but the actual form of questions and their order was not relevant. Data collected from the interviews aims at defining the target groups and their information needs in Tampere Vocational College's English websites. These answers provide information for Sweeney's eight-step plan, in step concerning understanding of the objectives, target groups and services in particular. Focused interview gave respondents the possibility to express their ideas and thoughts freely, still focusing on the themes this study aims to answer, but also to bring up new ideas and questions during the conversation. (Hirsjärvi et al 1997, 203).

6.2.1 Selecting the respondents

The process of selecting the suitable respondents starts with defining the persons that have substantial knowledge and experience on the subject of the study. In this study it became clear in the very beginning that due to the tight schedule of the research it was impossible to utilize the actual users of the site as respondents. A questionnaire could have been prepared and sent to these possible users of the site, but it was predicted that the answering percentage would have been very low. In addition the tar-

get groups could be significantly different and thus indicate very different needs regarding their information needs that all those groups should be included to the pool of respondents to be able to draw conclusions from the results. Another option would have been to focus only to one target group for example students, but this was not the intended purpose of the case organization. They rather wanted information that would serve all possible customer groups. Furthermore because the purpose and objective of the case organization was to gather as much information on the subject as possible, the researcher decided to use the personnel working with international operations as respondents in this study hence they have a very deep understanding of the current stage of the websites, and also for possible future needs and thus can be said that they are experts that have substantial knowledge and experience in this subject.

These five people are responsible for the international operations of Tampere Vocational College. Their job descriptions focus on maintaining and creating partnerships with other schools, handling the incoming and outgoing exchange students including their housing and studies; but also attending for international projects including planning and applying for them. In addition they are responsible for developing whole degree programs in English in the organization. These five persons and short descriptions of their areas of responsibility are following;

Laaksonen Merja – Head of International Operations

- In charge of the whole international operations in Tampere Vocational College, negotiates strategies with management, coordinates international activities and is responsible for developing international operations in the organization.

Haveri Ritva, Siirtonen Anna-Maija and Huhtala Tuomas – International Relations Coordinators

- Are responsible for updating brochures materials and webpages, briefing about international operations in the organization, compiling project applications and offering assistance to all education fields regarding international projects, organizing events, participating and organizing visits for foreigners and other cooperation partners, coaching outgoing students and teachers, maintaining cooperation partner relations, participating in overall planning and development of international operations.

Helin Merja – Guidance-counselor for students studying in English language programs

- Is responsible for compiling guidance materials for students studying in English programs of Tampere Vocational College, guiding the students regarding further studies after graduation, coordinating with application procedure for English programs.

These respondents are the experts in the organization regarding international operations and their target groups and are thus used in this context to gather deeper knowledge about the possible target groups of Tampere Vocational College, their information needs and sufficiency of updating resources. Since there are only five people fitting this description, the researcher decided to interview them all to get deeper knowledge on the matter. Including all five persons as respondents it can be assumed that their opinions represent the real world and thus conclusions can be drawn from this information gained.

6.2.2 Organizing the interviews

As already mentioned when justifying focused interviews (also known as semi-structured interviews), the questions were based on an interview guide (appendices 1 and 2) that was delivered to the respondents beforehand that included four themes; target groups, information needs & content, updating and finally good examples. As the framework for the questions was similar to all respondents, the same themes with same layout were discussed and this in turn helped in analyzing the responses systematically.

The interviews were conducted individually and face-to-face in the premises of Tampere Vocational College depending on the branch where the respondent was working. None of the respondents declined to be interviewed. The language used in the interviews was Finnish due to the fact that it is the mother tongue for both the respondents and the researcher, in order to avoid any misunderstandings in the answers or the questions. Interviews were organized during May and June 2013 due to requests from the case organization. The reliability can suffer in the interview situation if respondents feel that they need to give socially acceptable answers or if they feel threatened by the situation. To avoid this, the data collected in the interviews was

handled in confidence and the individual comments of the participants cannot later be identified nor are forwarded.

6.3 Analyzing data

Before analyzing the data must be organized. For this purpose all the interviews were recorded and transcribed meaning reproduced as a written account using actual words (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 485). Respectively responses with significant differences were marked and a summary for each question was written. Discussions such as examples concerning individuals or jokes told during the interview were left out from the analysis if they did not have substantial explanatory meaning regarding the response.

Qualitative data analysis aims at detecting patterns in data, identifying deviants, detection of conformance, classification, and validation or to construct a model of some sort (Adams 2007, 155). Qualitative data analysis can include analyzing the field notes, analyzing relationships and interactions, social type analysis or describing social structures. Following steps of qualitative data analysis can be defined;

1. Deciding what is interesting data,
2. Exploring the data collected and separating the interesting parts,
3. Leaving all other data outside the research,
4. Classifying and categorizing and theming the data that has been chosen to be interesting and finally,
5. Writing a summary of the data (Adams 2007, 156; Saunders et al 2007, 479-480, 482, 485-486; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 93-94).

The interview guide was already set in four different themes according to the research questions this study aims to answer. The themes were;

- Target groups,
- Information needs & content,
- Updating responsibilities and finally,
- Good examples.

These four themes were analysed in order to receive information how the English websites of Tampere Vocational College could be developed to better serve the needs of the target groups and overall to develop the marketing communication done

via Tampere Vocational College's English websites and thus possibly building the Tampere Vocational College brand and conspicuousness.

Qualitative analysis is often divided into deductive and inductive analysis. Inductive analysis meaning the logic of conclusions starting from single to create general whilst in deductive analysis the logic is vice versa. This study was completed by deductive analysis hence it is a single case study. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 95-97).

Saturation of the data collected means that the researcher starts to collect data not deciding beforehand how many respondents to include in the study; data collection is then continued until no new data is recovered. Thus it can be said that researcher has enough data when same issues start to compile in interviews. Saturation thus indicates the amount of data needed to produce a theoretically significant result. (Hirsjärvi et al 1997, 177). As the amount of respondents was not wide enough for saturation in this study, the greatest similarities and differences were analysed. (Adams 2007, 111, 144-149; Hirsjärvi et al 1997, 177, 202-203, 204-206; Saunders et al 2007, 312; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 74-76, 87-88).

7 RESEARCH RESULTS

In this section of the thesis, research results based on interviews conducted with the personnel working with international operations in the case organization are presented and answers to the research questions presented in chapter 3 are provided. This section answers to the following detailed research questions:

- What are the target groups that need information in English language?
- What information do they need?
- How should the content be developed in the websites?
- Who should be responsible for keeping the information up-to-date?

The interviews were organized in order to define the target groups using the English websites, gathering information regarding their information needs and how the content of the websites could be developed to serve their needs better. Interviews also included

questions regarding the organizing of updating responsibilities and gave the possibility of interviewees to give examples of good websites they have encountered. Respondents included all personnel working with international operations in the organization, which at the moment consisted of five people.

7.1 Defining the target groups

The respondents were all in all quite unanimous regarding defining the target groups; small variations depending on the respondents' point of view were transcribed. The respondents also pointed out that in recent years the number of contacts made via company websites has increased significantly, but also that schools, companies or other organizations that are seeking a co-operation partner usually start their search in the Internet. Thus the websites are actually serving both the current co-operation partners as well as a contact point for possible new partners. In addition the respondents' stated that each of these target groups play equally important role for the organization and thus it cannot be said that one target group is less or more important. The respondents identified the following main target groups; students, own personnel, co-operation partners and future partners. Each of these main target groups can still be divided into smaller sections depending on the variations of their information needs. These target groups are discussed and illustrated in more detail in the following sections.

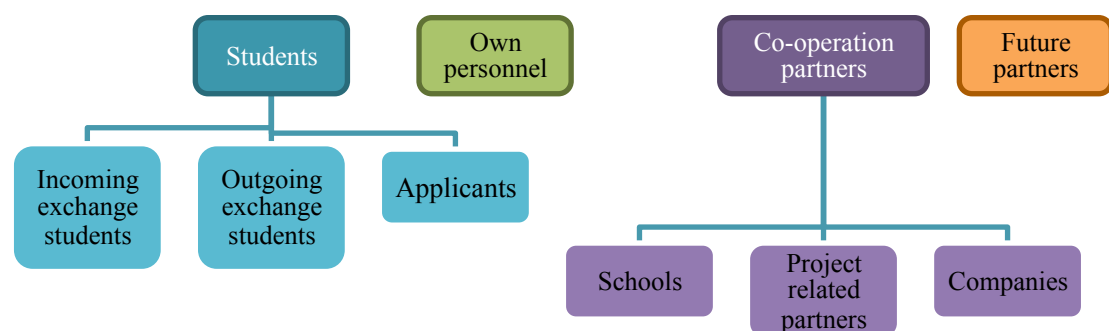


Figure 3. Target groups of Tampere Vocational College's English websites.

Students

According to the respondents students are one major target group for Tampere Vocational College. This target group includes both new possible students (e.g. applicants) as well as students that are currently studying in the organization. The information needs of these two groups differ slightly, when the possible student e.g. an applicant is more likely to be interested in the possibilities Tampere Vocational College is offering for student exchanges or other possibilities to be international whilst the current student is more interested in the actual details and how to be able to seek additional information regarding the possibilities, whom to contact and so on. Of course there are also other channels to serve the existing students in Tampere Vocational College, such as student intranet, but the respondents thought that some level of information would also be beneficiary to present in the public website for current students. The respondents indicated that nowadays some students are actually interested in the exchange and international possibilities as early on when selecting the organization where to complete one's degree, thus the internationality possibilities should be presented more clearly in the websites. The respondents also pointed out that immigrant students of Tampere Vocational College that are possibly seeking opportunities could be using the English site instead of the Finnish one, and this is a fact that also needs to be acknowledged.

The student target group is then divided into more detailed depending on whether the student is an incoming exchange student, meaning that the student is coming from another country or institution to complete a part or certain amount of studies in Tampere Vocational College, whilst outgoing exchange students is a student of Tampere Vocational College, seeking to complete a part or certain section of studies in a foreign institution. Usually these outgoing students are completing their on-the-job learning abroad in various countries rather than actually studying abroad. The respondents also pointed out that students seeking to complete their degree in English (referred as applicants) should not be forgotten. Tampere Vocational College is currently implementing few degrees totally in English language and more degrees are developed to be offered totally in English, thus this target group is becoming even more important in the future and they should be served as well. At the moment also the English degrees are mainly offered to students living in Finland, but for example the Wilderness Guide degree is designed for foreigners.

Own personnel

Respondents identified Tampere Vocational College's own personnel to be considered as one target group. Personnel has the possibility to participate in teacher exchange periods or they are otherwise visiting other institutions or companies abroad and thus seeking information of the organization in English language. In order for the English information to be accessible everywhere it was considered best to present in the public website of Tampere Vocational College instead of offering the information in intranet.

Co-operation partners

The respondents identified co-operation partners to include all sorts of co-operation that Tampere Vocational College is implementing at the moment, including partner schools, institutions, project related partners as well as companies that are offering on-the-job learning placements for Tampere Vocational College's students. The respondents also indicated that the information needs of these groups vary significantly and thus they are divided into more detailed sections. The three sections under this group are; schools, project related partners and companies.

Respondents identified the partner schools as one major group, which is seeking information in English, thus the partnership system Tampere Vocational College has been using is under development as well. In the past the co-operation between partner schools might have been very short-term or not based on a permanent contract and student placements have been negotiated as single cases. In the near future the aim is to sign more permanent agreements with partner schools and to stabilize the network of partner schools to consistent and longer co-operation. These permanent contracts with partner schools would enable to stabilize the foreign exchange possibilities offered for Tampere Vocational College's students.

Another major partner group is project related partners, these partners can be other schools, institutions, some domestic or foreign ministry's or anything else, the point is that Tampere Vocational College is implementing a project with them, respondents explained. Usually the project concerns some level of development work or the aim is to seek new operating models or to test some existing new model in practice, but as the respondents described in the real world anything and everything can be a pro-

ject and the nature of different projects varies significantly. The respondents also pointed out that Tampere Vocational College is a huge organization and it might participate in over 80 projects annually; these groups definitely need to be served in the websites. The respondents also stated that the project co-operation details are required to be illustrated by law in the Tampere Vocational College websites.

According to the respondents the third group is companies that Tampere Vocational College is co-operating with, these companies can be accepting Tampere Vocational College's students to accomplish their on-the-job learning with them. In addition Tampere Vocational College is offering education packages for companies, each package is designed based on the client company's needs. Many of the respondents stated that especially the information needs of companies should be explored more.

Future partners

The respondents identified the future partners target group to be of more importance in the future. They stated that Finland has a good reputation abroad and the level of education is considered to be very excellent here, but in addition they indicated that especially Tampere region offers interesting possibilities for foreigners. Respondents included all sorts of future possibilities in this group not depending on whether they are companies, project partners or other schools and institutions.

A new partner group could be forming when authorities of different countries are becoming more interested in exchange possibilities and co-operation done internationally. Thus the co-operation partners might not be only other school and educational institutions in the future anymore, but could be foreign governments or such. In addition the ECVET study point transfer system that has been planned also for the upper secondary schools and vocational schools in the European Union that enables students to select studies or packages of studies to be completed in another institution and the credits are transferrable to their degree could be forming a new major target group in the future. Although nothing definite about this ECVET credit transfer system could not be defined yet; the respondents acknowledged that this is an issue in the future and needs to be considered as well.

7.2 Information needs and content

Overall the respondents indicated that the content should be more interactive and alive, using more maps, pictures and videos was on a wishlist of each of the respondents. Some even hoped for the English site to have the exact similar content than the Finnish site, but this is not possible due to personnel resources at the moment. Furthermore the respondents stated that for Tampere Vocational College the quantity of international operations and possibilities is not an issue, but instead quality should be improved. According to the respondents the home page should guide to essential information and illustrate what is included in the websites (e.g. to form a contents list like written books have). Currently the aim has been to get the basic information needed by the existing partners and incoming students available on the websites.

Although the information needs of these target groups that the respondents have identified vary significantly; an exact distinction between information needs of different target groups cannot be presented. This is due to the fact that many target groups could be interested in the same information, for example our partners as well as our own personnel could be interested in our history, or contact information of our international office. According to the respondents the main differences in information needs develop between students & applicants' and co-operation partners. The respondents reported that students and applicants are often interested in practical issues regarding the studies and the options that Tampere Vocational College offers. On the other hand the co-operation partners are interested in more general information regarding the organization and the Finnish education system overall, they often like to compare Tampere Vocational College as an organization to their own organization to get a more profound comprehension on what they are dealing with.

In addition respondents stated that the information needs of own personnel are satisfied using intranet, but in some cases the information targeted to Tampere Vocational College's personnel could also be presented in the public website, because in that way it would be accessible anywhere and anytime. This could perhaps increase the usage of these materials, when members of own personnel are introducing the organization for visitors or when they are visiting abroad themselves.

Based on the information gained in the interviews, combining the wishes and suggestions made by the respondents the researcher suggests that following sections are presented in the websites.

About us

The respondents identified several issues regarding the organization and its operations itself that need to be presented in the websites. They also added that this information is actually for the use of each of the target groups defined, but more specifically serving the purpose and needs of the current and future co-operation partners.

The section should present following issues;

- Basic information of the organization including history (Tampere Vocational College has been formed by merging two big organizations that used to be Pirkanmaa Educational Consortium and Tampere College) and administrative structure illustrating the role of City of Tampere as owner of Tampere Vocational College,
- Special features of the organization; very large school in the scale of Finland, offers education in nearly all fields possible, multiple study options for both youth and adults, one of the best equipped school in Finland (especially in the technical fields),
- Organizations premises and their locations, perhaps even a guide how to get to each location by public transportation,
- Study fields and –programs offered,
- Clearly opening up the Finnish education system and level of education (not a university, but a vocational education and part of upper secondary education).

For applicants

The respondents stated this section is targeted for all persons that are planning on applying for Tampere Vocational College, mostly these users are youngsters but also adults should be considered. This section should introduce the study offering of Tampere Vocational College and moreover the programs conducted in English, because the applicant's to those programs are mostly foreigners that are not able to understand the Finnish site.

- Study programs offered and conducted in English, with detailed descriptions of content,
- Application process clearly presented, perhaps using a picture or a chart including schedule of student selection,
- Facts about living in Finland (for those who are coming from abroad), such as where to find accommodation, residence permits and such,
- General information regarding Pirkanmaa area.

For students going abroad

The respondents stated that this section targeted to current students that are seeking possibilities to go abroad to complete either studies during the school year, on-the-job-learning or summer studies could also be presented in an intranet instead of the public website. But justified the section to be presented in the public site, thus in some cases students that are applying for Tampere Vocational College, might already make their decision based on the exchange possibilities that the organization has to offer. This section would thus serve them as well and the student experiences would be good PR for the organization.

- Exchange possibilities, perhaps in the form of a map, countries Tampere Vocational College has partners, co-operation schools,
- Student's experiences from abroad, by writing and publishing blogs, using videos made by students themselves or writing articles "stories" of students exchange periods,
- Information of contact persons in each study field responsible for organizing exchange periods,
- Map "see where our students have been abroad".

For partners

This section is directly targeted to current and future partners. According to the respondents this section is actually required by the law, hence financiers of the projects obligate the organization to present the information of ongoing and ended projects in their websites. In addition some projects have their own websites, blogs, Facebook pages and so on, depending on the topic of the project. The respondents pointed out that the visuality issue of this section is highly important, because merely listing projects by their names is not giving sufficient information and furthermore is boring to read.

- Detailed information needed in project applications and reports about Tampere Vocational College,
- Project references of ongoing and ended projects, the focus should be in the development work done by projects not the projects itself – this is required by financiers.

For immigrants

The respondents stated that as education for immigrants is a special field, that Tampere Vocational College is offering programs, this section should also be available in English language. The section should include short descriptions of programs offered for immigrants, persons whom to contact for additional information as well as the

application schedules. Hence the applications are in electronic form, the page should already have the possibility to send one's application immediately if the application period is open. The section for immigrants could also include other contact information regarding other units of City of Tampere that are serving immigrants.

Contact us

According to the respondents this section should include the contact information of International Office, including a detailed presentation of each person's area of responsibility in order to avoid contacting the wrong person. Furthermore the contact information of directors of different units and top management should be presented as well.

Brochures

This section should gather all printed brochures and other marketing material of Tampere Vocational College to be seen in electronic version (either PDF or something else). The materials should also be printable. As the respondents stated, this section could also include ready-made presentations of the organization that are kept up to date. This section would serve the partners but Tampere Vocational College's own personnel as well, when they are presenting the organization to foreign visitors or visiting abroad themselves.

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

The respondents also stated that a section of FAQ (frequently asked questions) would be a good supplement to the English site, since international operations personnel is constantly answering similar questions regarding some topics. At this stage the respondents identified the following questions to be answered in the FAQ section:

- Am I entitled to medical care?
- May I take paid work at weekends during holiday period?
- What will happen if I fall ill during my stay in Finland?
- How much money do you have to be able to show that you have at your disposal if you wish to come here as student?
- What should I do if the embassy says it has not been notified of the decision?
- How long does it take for the Migration Board's decision to reach the embassy?
- Can I get the decision in English?
- Information regarding residence permit

The FAQ section should be supplemented on a regular basis, and additional questions and answers provided with issues that are often asked, as the respondents stated in the interviews.

7.3 Organizing the updating of the site

The respondents hoped that all information presented in the Finnish site could also be offered in English, but acknowledged that the current resources are not enabling this. Thus this English site is been developed to serve the needs of the target groups and thus perhaps decreasing the need for updating and making it possible to keep the content up-to-date with fewer resources. The respondents were very concerted and stated that the website should have more interactive content. In addition they also pointed out that having more interactive and current content would also cause the updating work to increase in the future.

Regarding the fact that who or what department should then be responsible for updating the content in the English site, the respondents felt that a model where the one having the information is responsible for updating seemed to be the best one. Communications department or International Office could generate general information regarding Tampere Vocational College, but each educational field should be responsible for updating their own parts of the site. Of course these persons need to be educated to operate the content management system and some guidelines should also be set and adopted by everyone. Another important issues to consider was also pointed out by the respondents, that the updating should not be the responsibility of a single person but rather a team, because substitute situations should also be considered.

According to the respondents the site should be updated once or twice a month, depending on the information. For example current events or other important information such as application periods can change several times a year, when project descriptions, Tampere Vocational College's history and more stable information needs to be updated every two or three years and are required to be up-to-date by law at all times. The respondents also stated that in a large organization like Tampere Voca-

tional College, the actual generating and gathering of information usually takes more time than generating it to the website via content management system.

To conclude the questions regarding the updating work and the amount of content seemed to be very challenging for the respondents at the moment, thus the organizational structure of Tampere Vocational College is still forming and changes are made constantly according to experiences gained. Due to this fact, the suggestions and conclusions regarding this part will remain very superficial.

7.4 Good examples given by respondents

The respondents suggested several other educational organizations websites for benchmarking purposes or just to get some ideas and tips for future development of Tampere Vocational College's websites. Some sites had features that according to the respondents would be a good supplement to add also in Tampere Vocational College's websites. To summarize, the respondents thought that schools all together are pretty official and traditional and this can also be seen in their websites. The desire to have a more interactive and fun site for Tampere Vocational College was presented during the interviews.

The respondents identified the following sites to be informative and good basic sites; perhaps the visual appearance was a bit dull.

- www.hibb.hamburg.de (Hamburger Institut für Berufliche Bildung)
- www.ks-goeppingen.de (Kaufmännische Schule Göppingen)
- www.zbc.dk (Zealand Business College)

On the other hand, these sites had good visual appearance including nicely presented colors and pictures;

- www.osao.fi (Oulun seudun ammattiopisto)
- www.kao.fi (Kajaanin ammattiopisto)
- www.osboskovic.edu.rs (Ruder Boskovic High School).

In addition the respondents listed websites that had managed to succeed with their "About us" section, which includes basic information of the organization; these two were www.greenriver.de and www.hibb.hamburg.de.

The respondents stated that Point College in Porvoo (www.pointcollege.fi) has managed to execute their websites in three languages (Finnish, Swedish and English) without the visual appearance being too heavy. This same idea goes through their printed materials as well. This has proven to be a good solution for this organization and resulted in the fact that 90 percent of their students are coming from abroad when considering their programmes implemented in English. According to the respondents another good example of clear and easy to comprehend and follow was the website of Helsinki Business School (www.businesscollege.fi).

Furthermore Omnia (www.omnia.fi) had some good features as well, that according to the respondents could be implemented in the websites of Tampere Vocational College. These features included an extensive and informative brochure called “Omnia Guidebook for Visitors” that was downloadable in their site. This brochure included information regarding the location of the institution as well as suggestions on how to get there by means of public transportation. The brochure also opened up the organizational structure of the huge organization to the possible visitors, but also gave ideas on how to spend leisure time in Finland and suggested several places to visit in main city area.

The respondents also indicated that all information is not relevant to be presented in Tampere Vocational College’s websites, but could be referred to another site which has already explained the issues thoroughly. Of course in these cases the publisher of the site referred should be considered, and only refer to those sites that are published by a reliable organization, such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education & Culture or Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE). For example the websites of Finnish National Board of Education include a good description of national core curriculum that could be referred to. This would also decrease the amount of work done by international personnel in Tampere Vocational College; hence the information is constantly kept up-to-date by the FNBE.

8 CREDIBILITY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

In order to ensure the credibility of research findings several aspects of the study should be considered;

- The target and the object of the study,
- The schedule of the study,
- Researchers own commitment,
- The way of collecting data,
- Who were the respondents and
- What was the relationship between the respondents and the researcher,
- Analysis of the data,
- Reliability as well as
- The way the study was reported. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 131, 133, 135, 138-139).

Researchers ability to invest enough time for the study can be considered as one of the basic requirements of a successful study. Also neutrality of the researcher must be considered, did the researcher seek to understand the respondents and how much of the information gained was filtered through researchers own perspective including age, gender, religion, beliefs or other factors. In order for experts or other researchers to evaluate the study it also should be public. When evaluated as a whole the study should have internal consistency. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 131, 133, 135, 138-139)

Other ways of evaluating research data is with terms reliability and validity. *Reliability* evaluates how well the research meets the objective to be studied and *validity* evaluates if the study could be repeated with corresponding results. The use of these terms have been criticised in qualitative studies, because they meet the needs of quantitative study. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 133). Toivonen (1999, 105) questions the validity and reliability of qualitative research in general and states that the challenge seems to be that due to personal differences, each researcher formulates and presents interview questions in a different way. Each respondent also answers the questions based on their personal view and way of being. (Toivonen 1999, 105). *Generalizability* on the other hand tells something about why this topic is important and what is the importance of this particular phenomenon outside this narrow research study (Adams 2007, 235-240; Saunders et al 2007, 149-153).

The subject of this study was suggested by the case organization and objective of this study derived from the need of the organization to develop its English websites to better serve the users. There was also a possibility to reconsider the English websites as a whole due to the recent merger between two organizations now forming Tampere Vocational College. The schedule was extremely tight and caused some problems during the process because the need to launch the new English websites was urgent. As it happened the site was eventually launched during this research process. Researcher however was very committed to the research and was able to use several hours daily of research work. Regarding researchers neutrality, it must be stated that researchers own perspective including age, gender, religion, beliefs and also the fact that the researcher is also working for the case organization might have had an effect on the research results, but at all times researcher sought to understand the respondents.

This study was based on the case organization, Tampere Vocational College (TREDU). The background information regarding the organization and its strategy and goals was gained by interviewing the Communications Manager of Tampere Vocational College, basic knowledge regarding website development was based on literature review conducted before the study. It must be noted that the researcher is related to the Communications Manager of Tampere Vocational College, from whom the background information regarding the organization was received. This relation however had no influence on the research or the presuppositions of the research; hence the Communications Manager was not involved in the study in any other way than by offering the background information. Because the fact of the relation could have influenced some of the answers to the interview questions and distorted the study results, this was deliberately not told to the respondents. The researcher did have a presupposition regarding the development needs in Tampere Vocational College's English websites and the fact that there is a demand for new website.

This study aimed to refine only the situation in the case organization in question and is based on the responses received from the personnel working with international operations in the organization whom were individually interviewed and since the interviews were transcribed word-by-word and carefully analysed, there should not be a lack of objectivity. The amount of interviews included in this study was quite small

and it could have been argued to be too small in order to generalize results to reflect the real world. However all personnel currently working with international operations in the case organization were interviewed, thus it can be assumed that their opinions present the real world, and for many questions the answers were quite similar. The statement by Toivonen was proven to be accurate throughout the research; each respondent naturally responded to the questions based on their reality and experience.

This study represents only the development needs in the case organization and cannot be generalized as such to any other organization. As the requirement for all master level studies in Finland this study is also entirely public and no appendices are kept as confidential, merely the recorded interviews and transcribes will not be published in order to protect the privacy of the respondents. The recorded and transcribed interviews are also not published to the case organization and thus respondents' confidentiality will also be secured in the future. Information gained from the interviews is introduced in the results of this study only.

9 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This part of the research focuses on introducing the final conclusions of the research compared to the objectives of the research and answers to the main research question: *How can Tampere Vocational College make its English language websites to better serve its customers and co-operation partners?* This part also includes reflection on how to utilize the results of the research in the development of Tampere Vocational College's English websites in addition to giving recommendations for the organization in means of how they could develop their English websites even further in the future. The reflection is limited to the case organization and the purpose is not to give general guidance or concrete suggestions to any other organizations.

The educational field seems to be in constant change in Finland these days, and significant changes to the operating environment are coming in the future. This merger between Tampere College and Pirkanmaa Educational Consortium has presented an

opportunity to develop the newly formed Tampere Vocational College's websites to better serve the needs of their target groups and develop these problem areas presented in chapter 2 regarding the case organization and the problems they have encountered with their previous websites. As discussed in chapter 3 the organization's strategy is guiding the development work, and at the moment the Tampere city strategy focuses on increasing internationality in the educational sector and improving working-life orientation. Improving the English websites of Tampere Vocational College will thus follow this strategy. Following the eight strategic steps in developing a website introduced by Susan Sweeney in chapter 5, I am suggesting several improvements to the case organization.

Websites tend to have multiple purposes at the same time, such as providing information, selling and offering customer service. However, there should be a fundamental purpose as the driver behind a website. Regarding defining the objectives of the website, I would suggest that the organization would go back to basic and start by defining a set of primary goals and targets that are aimed to be achieved by the website only, not as a part of all marketing efforts. The primary objective of the website should be supporting and establishing brand identity and brand awareness, thus the organization has changed its name and is not perhaps that known in the area at the moment. I would say that the primary purpose of Tampere Vocational College's website is to increase awareness and educate the target market about the company, but also to reduce internal costs by reducing inefficiencies and expenditures. Each of the objectives set to the website separately should relate back to organizations' strategy and objectives defined there; in this case support Tampere Vocational College to be seen as one integral organization that is offering educational possibilities for both youth and adult students as well as apprenticeship training. The mission of the case organization is to be the biggest vocational educator in the Pirkanmaa region and the focus is on offering quality education. This objective should be communicated through their website as well. The planning work plays an important role in the success of the website. Competitive landscape is well known in the organization and benchmarking of competitors sites has been executed in a small scale already. At the moment the websites exists because "we just need to have a website", not to serve a certain goal or preset purpose.

I would highly recommend the case organization to consider especially the secondary objectives introduced in chapter 5.1. These secondary objectives tend to be more technical in their nature, but would offer the case organization more possibilities for success. I would recommend the case organization to consider at least the following issues for secondary objectives; designing the site to be search engine friendly to increase traffic, develop the site in a way that it would promote also company's Facebook account, create content that encourages repeat traffic, adding viral marketing elements to the site enabling users to recommend their products and pay attention to customer loyalty because lifelong learning is a necessity in today's business world. The target groups and their needs seem to be clearly defined in the case organization, but especially the companies co-operating with Tampere Vocational College and their information needs should be defined in more detail. This would be a good subject for further study for this case organization.

Regarding the blueprint of the site, the case organization falls into the category of companies that have not yet realized the importance of planning before taking action. Perhaps it could be a good idea to form a blueprint of the current websites Tampere Vocational College has and start development work from there. This planning would definitely pay off, when thinking about the functionality and navigation of the site. The visual appearance of the site is following the graphical guidelines of the case organization, and thus I would recommend the organization to focus on the navigation, functionality and content parts instead of the visual appearance. Of course because the case organization is huge, there is a bit of an information overload in their websites but this is somehow understandable.

Addressing the four aspects regarding the actual site illustrated in figure 2 (see page 14). In my opinion the *design* is actually working and the *graphical interface* is fresh. Some development areas can still be found. Previous site of Tampere College had the problem of using too small font size. Users with color-blindness need to be considered as well because Ministry of Finance states in their guidelines (JHS 129) that public organizations sites should be usable also with person's suffering from red-green color blindness. The case organization would definitely also benefit from using responsive web design in their site, hence significant amount of users are accessing the site via mobile devices.

The *navigation and information structure* of the site should be clarified and perhaps a possibility to use site search could be implemented. I would execute the site search in a way that user is able to select wheather to search only from education programs, contact information or all content in the websites. This would help the user to go through the results quicker. Ministry of Finance (2007) is actually requiring the use of breadcrumb navigation in public organization websites, and this feature should be added to ease the navigation throughout the site. Good navigation would in addition help search engines to rank the site.

Futhermore the amount of *content* presented in the site should be also considered, as Nielsen (1997) suggests that readers are not actually reading everything online but rather scan through the content and that in fact the text content presented in the websites should be scannable. More importantly the content should be developed in the perspective of the users not the organization, thus the organizational structure is a secondary issue for the user who is seeking a certain service or product. The road to success in online world lies in the careful planning of the content and presenting the key content interesting to users. Especially thorough planning work in structure and architecture of the site in the case organization would be beneficiary.

Moreover, the site would serve the users better by improving *functionality and performance* issues by offering self-service tools such as enabling downloading of brochures and increasing possibilities for viral marketing by offering value-added functionality options such as “tell-a-friend” –tool. Another issue to consider is the cross-browser compatibility and the ability to use the site via different operating systems and web browsers. This has been a problem in the past, but should now be considered as well. Besides functionality also performance should be taken into consideration, many countries abroad are still using dial-up connections and using too heavy design or significant amount of large images could make the site so heavy; it takes ages to download but not offering a lot of additional value to the site.

In this report many tips and guidelines for writing in the web were introduced. I would recommend the case organization to offer some courses or education for their personnel responsible for updaiting the websites. There seems to be quite long pages in the sites at the moment, and the idea of the inverted pyramid is not used. When

considering the content, less in definitely more. The readers are not actually reading word-by-word but scan the text through, thus making the content and the pages shorter and easy to read would definitely increase user friendliness. In some materials the case organization has also the problem of writing everything there is to say about the subject, instead of rather telling only what is interesting to the readers.

I would recommend the organization of building the content in a way that is easily readable by search engines to utilize this free marketing tool, because when users are looking something online they are likely to use a search engine and this would be a good way to generate traffic to Tampere Vocational College's websites. To be able to utilize search engines, attention should be paid to three aspects: content planning, linking between the pages and visitor monitoring. Another way to increase search engine ranking is to use the same vocabulary in the actual content text of the pages that users are using.

In addition I would recommend that the case organization would measure the incoming traffic on a more regular basis, Google Analytics has been used to some extent in the past. Significant feedback could be received about the usage of the current site by statistics offered by Google Analytics. I would recommend that statistics were taken every two weeks or monthly regarding visitors who have been on the site and what are the pages they leave from. In addition it should be monitored where the users are coming to the site. Is the traffic source direct one, referral from another site the organization has an ad or perhaps coming via search engine. If the traffic is mostly coming via search engines, then it would be beneficiary to find out what are the key phrases or words used, when seeking information. Thirdly I would suggest the case organization to pay attention to the bounce rates, meaning the users that came to the site but did nothing before leaving. This could tell something about the content, if users were looking for a different site, or about unsuccessful key phrases used.

In the future, there should be possibilities for the site to grow and evolve. As mentioned in the beginning, the educational field is facing significant changes in their operating environment in the near future. There is definitely a need to continue the development work done in the Tampere Vocational College's websites, the content needs to be adapted to users' needs as they change. I would also recommend the case

organization to organize user testing on their current site. The user tests could involve five people from each target group identified in this research to find out how functional and easy to use the site is currently. I would recommend this user testing to be implemented by observing the users finishing prearranged tasks instead of asking them about it.

To conclude, developing a website is a long and constantly evolving process, requiring significant amount of time and effort actually put in the planning phase before anything concrete has been developed. If enough resources are allocated to thoroughly build the blueprint and design the architecture and structure of the site, keeping in mind the customers' perspective instead of the organizations' the company is on the road to success. "A stale website is a dead website" (Sweeney, MacLellan & Dorey 2006, 91).

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

TARGET GROUPS

Who form the target groups for international activities?

- a) Partner universities and schools
- b) Incoming exchange students
- c) Working life
- d) Outgoing exchange students and staff members
- e) Project partners
- f) Who else?

Do you see some new target groups forming in the future that need to be considered?

INFORMATION NEEDS AND CONTENT

How much the information needs of these different target groups vary?

What information is essential?

What information is often asked?

What information you would assume the target groups will needed about us?

What information would you want to tell about Tredu?

What information other organizations usually present?

Is there some information that needs to be presented in the websites in the future if not right now?

How much content would you assume there will be regarding the websites?

UPDATING

How often the sites need to be updates in order to keep the information up-to-date?

Who should or could be responsible for updating the websites?

How much time would you estimate that the updating will take?

In your opinion will the workload increase, decrease or remain the same in the future?

GOOD EXAMPLES

Do you have any

- a) Examples of good websites,
- b) Good explanations used in some websites,
- c) Good websites we could refer to,
- d) Models of good website solutions?

HAASTATTELURUNKO

KOHDERYHMÄT

Ketkä muodostavat kansainvälisen toiminnan kohderyhmät?

- a) Yhteistyökoulut
- b) Meille tulevat vaihto-opiskelijat
- c) Työelämän edustajat
- d) Meiltä vaihtoon lähtevät opiskelijat ja henkilökunta
- e) Projekti yhteistyökumppanit
- f) Ketä muita?

Onko uusia kohderyhmiä muodostumassa lähitulevaisuudessa jotka tulisi huomioida?

TIEDON TARPEET JA SISÄLTÖ

Kuinka paljon eri kohderyhmien tiedon tarpeet vaihtelevat?

Mikä tieto on ehdottoman tärkeää?

Mitä asioita usein kysytään?

Mitä tietoa olettaisit kohderyhmien kaipaavan Tredusta?

Mitä haluaisit kertoa Tredusta?

Mitä tietoa muut organisaatiot yleensä kertovat?

Onko jotain sellaista tietoa, joka nettisivuilla tulisi esittää tulevaisuudessa, ellei juuri nyt?

Kuinka paljon arvelisit sisältöä tulevan nettisivuille?

PÄIVITTÄMINEN

Kuinka usein sivustoa tulee päivittää, jotta tieto olisi ajan tasalla?

Kuka voisi/kenen pitäisi vastata sivuston päivittämisestä?

Kuinka paljon arvioisit päivittämisen vievän aikaa?

Tuleeko päivittämisen määrä mielestäsi lisääntymään, vähentymään vai pysymään ennallaan tulevaisuudessa?

HYVÄT ESIMERKIT

Onko sinulla

- e) Esimerkkejä hyvistä nettisivuista,
- f) Hyvistä selityksistä joita on käytetty jollain sivustolla,
- g) Hyviä nettisivuja joihin voisimme viitata,
- h) Malleja hyvistä nettisivu ratkaisuksista?